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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Tumbleweed Elementary Fights Youth Tobacco Use Joins National Kick Butts Day Initiative March 31, 2004**

[Phoenix, AZ] — Young people from Tumbleweed Elementary School are joining thousands of kids across the country who are taking part in Kick Butts Day, a nationwide initiative that makes kids leaders in the effort to stop youth tobacco use. As part of the Kick Butts Day celebration, sixth-grade Tumbleweed students are holding a poster contest for the school. Each classroom will develop a poster that promotes being tobacco free.

Throughout the year, young advocates take part in a variety of activities to protect kids from tobacco, including working with elected officials to develop policies that reduce youth tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke and educating their peers about tobacco companies' deceptive marketing practices.

"Smoking is not worth our time," said Alyssa Howard, a sixth grade student at Tumbleweed. Fellow student Stephanie Hibberd agrees. "Smoking is a bad influence for younger kids."

Tumbleweed Elementary is one of about 250 schools throughout the Valley working in collaboration with Maricopa County Tobacco Use Prevention Program to implement effective tobacco prevention curriculum and supportive programming. "In addition to implementing the 10 week *Get Real About Tobacco* curriculum, Tumbleweed always seeks ways to support the prevention messages and keep their students tobacco free," said Julie Weisbuch, Prevention Specialist for Maricopa County. On March 31, the posters will be displayed in the school cafeteria for viewing and the winners will be announced.

Throughout the county, elementary, middle and high school students will participate in a variety of Kick Butts Day activities. During 2003, thousands of kids carried out more than 1,500 events. We expect this number to increase in 2004.

"Kids are a powerful part of the solution to reducing youth tobacco use," said Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, which coordinates Kick Butts Day. "For Kick Butts Day 2004, kids are sending two important messages: they want the tobacco industry to stop targeting them with advertising and they want elected leaders at all levels to do more to protect them from tobacco."

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, killing more than 400,000 people every year. Every day, more than 4,000 kids try their first cigarettes; another 2,000 kids become addicted smokers, one-third of whom will die prematurely as a result.

For information on the national initiative, visit the Kick Butts Day website at [kickbuttsday.org](http://kickbuttsday.org). For more information about the Maricopa County Tobacco Use Prevention Program, visit [www.mactupp.org](http://www.mactupp.org) or call (602) 372-7272.

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